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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 001740

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PACHECO COMMENTS ON CAFTA-DR

REF: (A) SAN JOSE 01639  
(B) SAN JOSE 01455  
(C )SAN JOSE 01713  
(D) SAN JOSE 01720  
(E) SAN JOSE 01722

11. (U) On August 3, 2005, during his first weekly press conference held since CAFTA-DR was approved and signed by President Bush, Costa Rican President Abel Pacheco officially congratulated the U.S. government for ratifying the United States-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement(CAFTA-DR) and remarked on the efficiency of the U.S. Congress. At the same time, President Pacheco insisted that, in Costa Rica's case, there is no hurry to approve the agreement and it is necessary to take the time to analyze CAFTA-DR and to not make hasty decisions.

12. (U) "I am happy that George W. Bush ... signed CAFTA-DR. It is enviable how American democracy works," said President Pacheco. He added that "throughout history, Costa Rica has been prudent, and I prefer to wait until the clouds clear ... I will wait on the opinion of the Commission of Eminent Persons who are studying the agreement." (Ref A)

13. (U) Pacheco added, "I always have said that in Costa Rica we will sign CAFTA-DR at the appropriate moment, and it is the Legislative Assembly that will make the decision." He continued "...why do you push me regarding how long it will be until I send CAFTA-DR to the Assembly? I don't understand. Throughout history we have seen that when we rush to judgment, things turn out badly." When asked about mounting pressure from various business and political groups (Refs C, D, and E), he retorted "What is the hurry? We will go slow."

14. President Pacheco reiterated his requirement that the Legislative Assembly approve the Fiscal Reform package prior to his sending CAFTA-DR to the Assembly (Ref B).  
KAPLAN